

HOMILY FROM FATHER FRANCIS CHIAWA ON FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Lord open my eyes that I may know you and love you more.

The Lord God made us that we may know him, love him and be with him in paradise. This is the summary of the purpose of our creation. We may already know him and love him but what can we do to know and love him more?

Dear brothers and sisters, the cycle A readings which we read at the Mass last Sunday gave us the examples of two groups of people who encountered God. Both groups saw the marvels of the Lord, one group did not believe in him and thereby forfeited entering into the Promised Land. The other group, however, believed in the Lord and gave him their whole hearted commitment and love. Thus salvation came to their city.

This Sunday, the first reading and Gospel present to us the story of God's election and anointing of David (as the second king of Israel to replace the deceased Saul) and the Lord's opening of the eyes of a man born blind by anointing the man's eyes with clay mixed with the Lord's saliva. The second reading reminds us that that we are light in the Lord and we should therefore "Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:9).

In light of these, I would like us to center the homily on the theme, Lord open my eyes that I may know you and love you more. We see the realization of this prayer in the moment after the Lord had smeared the blind man's eyes with spittle and sent him to the pool of Siloam that he may wash and see. He did and began to see. Now the stage was set for the climax of this miracle story. The Lord met the man again and asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of man" (John 9:35). The man said, "Who is he that I may believe in him"? (John 9:36). The Lord said to him, "You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he"(John 9:37). Instantly, this man whose eyes were opened said, "I do believe, Lord" and then went down on his knees and worshipped the Lord. This is similar to the *kairos* moment when the Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "I am he, the one who is speaking with you" (John 4:26) meaning that he is the Messiah. The Lord revealed himself and at that point of revelation the woman could not contain her joy, she ran out and announced to her country men what had happened to her and they too encountered the Lord and believed in him. Their eyes were opened!

The person whom the Lord opens his eyes not just physically but spiritually is a changed person. Having looked at this from the point of view of the Gospel, let us turn to the first reading. Samuel and David are direct recipients of this joy the Lord gives whenever he opens the eyes of the person. Samuel did not know who would be the king until the Lord opened his eyes to see that it was David, the youngest son of Jesse. At that moment Samuel must have heaved a sigh of relief and then anointed David the second king of Israel thereby replacing the deceased king Saul. David and the blind man in the gospel have a few things in common. Both were chosen and anointed gratuitously. The anointing changed their story and status. The blind man could see Jesus and believe in Him and tell others about him. David became a prophet and a king. The anointing here calls to mind our baptism through

which we are incorporated into Christ and thus share in his triple office of teacher, prophet and king.

Dear brothers and sisters, like the young David and the man born blind, the Lord opened our eyes at baptism. That is the sacrament of enlightenment. For most of us, we were tiny infants when we are baptized, now as adults or grown-ups, how do we continue to see with the eyes of faith? Like the man born blind, we must accept that we need the light in order that the Lord will open our eyes. In the controversy between the man whose eyes were opened and the Pharisees, we see the moral of that story in the gospel. The Pharisees did not acknowledge that they were blind so they remained without sight but the blind man who knew that he was blind was cured of his blindness. We must look unto the Lord who assured us. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

In conclusion, the gospel has a total of seven signs which point to the identity of Jesus as God. Opening the eyes of the man born blind is the sixth of these signs. Other signs are first sign, the transformation of water into wine at Cana ([Jn 2:1-11](#)), second sign, the cure of the royal official's son ([Jn 4:46-54](#)) simply by the word of Jesus at a distance, the third sign, the cure of the paralytic at the pool with five porticoes in John chapter five, the fourth sign feeding the multitude with few loaves and fish, the fifth walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee, the seventh sign - the raising Lazarus from the dead. They sum up the purpose of the gospel. "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of [his] disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31).

What then do we need to do in order that the Lord may open our eyes that we may know and love him more. He does not need us to pay him. All that is needed of us is to want it and ask him to open our eyes. The attitude of the Pharisees in our gospel passage antithesis to this. Their attitude instead leads to blindness. The Lord said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind" (John 9:38). They were held hostage by pride, so they remained blind. Brothers and sisters, one thing we must do is never deny our sins and blindness. If one denies them healing does not come. If a sick person denies his sickness, it will only get worse. May we let the Lord touch us anew and we would see with a new set of eyes and thus come to know and love him more and more.

God love you!

Father Francis